

City of Cambridge Recycling Advisory Committee February 9, 2006 Meeting

Members Attending: Justin Adams, MIT; Rob Gogan, Harvard University; Cornelia Herzfeld, Cambridge resident; Adam Mitchell, Save That Stuff; Judy Nathan, Cambridge resident; Paul Schlaver, Cambridge Consumers Council, xxx??

Guests Attending: Kelly Dunn, Recycling Program Manager; Randi Mail, Cambridge Recycling Director; Shauna Schiller, Casella/FCR; Deb Sorocco; MIT

Thank You Note from Kevin Healy

Randi passed around a note from Kevin Healy, thanking the committee for its involvement in the City Council resolution recognizing his contributions to MIT's recycling program and wishing him good luck and a healthy retirement.

Market Update

Shauna reported that prices on paper were generally steady, but that plastics were climbing; they were getting \$800/ton for HDPE milk containers. Adam said that prices for cardboard had been dropping, and were about \$40 lower than 8 months ago. Shauna agreed and clarified that her report had compared the current month to the previous one.

Randi reported on the new baler at the Drop-Off Center. Instead of filling a 30-yard container every two weeks with about 90 lightweight 55-gallon plastic bags, they are making one plastic film bale roughly every 6 weeks. Aside from saving space, this is a tremendous benefit by avoiding the greenhouse gas emissions associated from trucking the material to Framingham vs. Charlestown. FCR is picking up the bales and marketing them to Trex, a plastic lumber company (www.trex.com). Randi added that a new set of stairs and ramp were being made for the Drop-Off Center, mostly made of recycled plastic lumber.

Paul suggested that the May or June meeting be held at DPW so that committee members could see the new developments (baler, ramp, etc). Shauna offered for FCR to pay for light refreshments.

School Update

Kelly reported on her work with the schools. Kelly said that she had started in May 2005, and had spent the first month meeting with custodians, making an inventory of their needs – while realizing that she needed to maintain the reputation Rick created of high customer service. She has been working hard to get the schools to consistently send her the [self reporting worksheets](#), and found that most (apart from three schools which represented an ongoing challenge: Tobin, Baldwin and King Open) doing so. She said that a paper-recycling contest (see below) that just started would be a good motivation to ensure schools consistently report their recycling efforts.

In October, Kelly, Randi and John Nardone had met with Dana Ham, the new Director of Facilities who supervises all the custodians. He was very open to and supportive of recycling.

In November, she had attended the monthly meeting of senior custodians, talked about recycling and gotten their feedback on inventory needs. Judy commented that the monthly meeting was a great development – that when they had started working with the schools, there had been no such meetings. Rob asked if there were any language barriers and Kelly responded that she had not encountered any.

Kelly also hand delivered the [School Recycling Procedures](#) (on the web) to all custodians and school administrators. This document was updated from Rick's version he distributed every school year. Paul suggested giving the new school committee a summary of the document. Judy suggested condensing it on a poster for custodians' workrooms.

Kelly said that she had set up a paper-recycling contest among the schools, to coincide with the nationwide Recyclemania contest among colleges and universities. If you want to help spread the word or get more involved contact her at kdunn@cambridgema.gov or 617.349.4836 or print and post [the flyer](#) at a school.

Future plans include attending more PTA meetings, using Backpack Express and working with various science projects of the schools (Science In the City day, science clubs for girls, etc.) She hopes to set up a meeting Justin Martin, the new School PIO officer in charge of marketing, about spreading the message to the families. Judy suggested that principals suggest active parents to Kelly.

Recycling Neighbors Program

Randi reported the development of a new program "Recycling Neighbors", a network of residents willing to talk to their neighbors about how, what and why to recycle. Kim Park, Recycling Intern has been helping her create an information packet that will include a list of different things recycling neighbors can do, such as posting flyers, observing neighborhood

participation, making presentations to local groups, etc. A couple dozen residents have been recruited through tabling and phone banking. Randi described the backbone of the program as an email network of residents that have committed to take action when prompted through routine announcements. During Public Works week, May 22-26, they will host a Recycling Neighbors Social. Please let Randi or Kim know if you'd like to get involved with this event!

Update on Solid Waste Stats

Randi then presented recycling and trash numbers from 2002 to the present. She pointed out that maintaining Cambridge's recycling rate of around 33% should be viewed as a success, given that 70% the City's households are renters and that 25% of residents do not speak English. These demographics demand constant education of recycling basics. Therefore, with high turnover and diversity it is an ongoing challenge to maintain the same level of recycling, let alone increase the rate at a steady or dramatic rate. She also noted that the DEP recently distributed a list of the 100 largest MA cities by pounds of trash per person. Cambridge was the 8th City, generating only 1.59 pounds of trash per person per day. * (This does not reflect privately served households.)

Randi also pointed out compared to last fiscal year, tons of paper recycling increased during the months of August, September, October, November and January. The City's paper campaign kicked off in the summer as well as delivery of 64-gallon totes just for paper to homeowners and owner-occupied buildings with 12 units or less.

However, paper tons did decrease dramatically in FY04. A number of suggestions were offered by Committee members to explain these drops:

- Increased use of online newspapers and the drop in Globe sales;
- Decrease in the size/weight of each individual Globe;
- Substitution of plastic for glass containers; and
- Increased scavenging for bottle deposit containers from curbside bins.

Rob pointed out that the most important number was trash generated per person, and that was the number we should be striving to reduce. He suggested that in terms of presentation, a few numbers, with comparison to regional and national trends, might be the most effective.

A discussion on bottled vs. tap water developed and the committee expressed interest in promoting the use of Cambridge water. Rob offered to draft a letter

suggesting that city buildings set an example by using city water. Randi told the Committee that the Public Works Buildings Division has set up a trial system in the main building that looks like a bubbler, but is really just a filter. Members requested that she share more information this at the next meeting.

Suggestions for the March meeting included water, waste and an update on the 2-year grant project for the City to work with Save That Stuff to offer compost collection to Cambridge businesses and the City Sprouts schools. Rob and Justin expressed their interest for Harvard and MIT to be included on the collection route, as their current contractor could not handle the volume they were producing.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:45 a.m.